

Varenya Chilukuri –NSF Youth Ambassador Program

Summer of 2017

When I first learned about the NSF APNA program from my father, I was thrilled that there was an opportunity for me to share my knowledge with some of the many underprivileged students in India. I immediately knew that this program was the perfect chance for me to make a sizable impact on the lives of those around me and also at the same time build my own character. Even though the workshop only lasted for 3 days, I was still able to learn so much about the lives of students in India and provide them with a basic foundation of the English language.

A few days after we landed in India, we began searching for a school to conduct the spelling bee workshop.

We finally decided to host the workshop at Telangana Social Welfare Residential School in Moosarambagh, Hyderabad.

T.S.W.R is a local government funded girls' high school for girls from low

income families. What really surprised me is that the students actually lived at the school. They would eat, sleep and study on campus. The school provided students with a place to sleep, daily meals, textbooks, and clothes.



Before my first day of teaching, we met with the headmistress to discuss what grade I would be teaching and for how long. At the conclusion of the meeting we decided that I would conduct the spelling bee for 7th graders for 2 hours every day for 3 days.

The first day of the workshop my family and I arrived at the school and we first visited the headmistress' office. From there we were introduced to the 7th grade English teacher and the computer teacher who would be assisting me during the workshop. We requested to use the media room as it had a projector where I show the students my slide show presentations. On the first day, I introduced myself and the aim of the spelling

workshop. Then I explained the purpose of NSF and why it is important. Next we covered the logistics of a spelling bee, basic spelling rules, and some prefixes. The first day of teaching was difficult as I had no prior teaching experience and the students could not understand my American accent. The students were unable to follow along with my



lesson and the English teacher repeatedly explained the material to the students in a manner they understood. I took the first day as a trial run and attempted to make the second day of the workshop more interactive. From this experience I realized how hard my teachers work to cover our syllabus in the given class period.

The next day as soon as I entered the school all the students waved to me and made me feel welcome. This really reduced my nervousness in teaching the second day. I decided to change to a regular classroom because the students were not used to learning with a projector. Using chalk and a blackboard, I began to review the material covered on the first day. I included more practice question to see what the students already knew. After reviewing



the previous day's material, I went on to teach the students more prefixes and suffixes and some word roots. The second day of the workshop went very well as I was able to handle the class alone without much assistance from the English teacher. Also, the students seemed to understand my accent and began to pay attention and participate in the lesson. At the end of the day when we had extra time, the students asked me questions about my school and my life in the U.S.

The third and final day of the workshop I reviewed the material from the last two days along with teaching the students some new roots. After teaching for one hour, we conducted the final spelling bee. The final spelling bee was composed of a written portion and an oral portion. After the spelling bee, we conducted an award ceremony to honor all the students for their hard work. We invited the headmistress to say a few words and hand out the prizes. The students with the top 5 scores in the spelling bee were given

a trophy and a vocabulary building book. All of the students were given participation certificates with the headmistress's signature.

Overall, the students were very interactive and loved to participate in review games and quizzes but it was obvious that some paid attention more than others. This experience showed me how



I should be as a student to learn the most and be noticed by the teacher. In addition this experience showed me how privileged I was to have access to a vast number of resources such as the internet. The school had nothing more than a computer lab and one projector. They did not even have the basic desk and chair. Even though each of these students has amazing potentials, they suffer from a lack of resources. Their knowledge is limited to the information given in textbooks and their teacher's lectures. In our world with internet, knowledge is limitless and there are no boundaries to our learning.

I had such a great experience teaching English to these amazing students, I wouldn't miss the chance to come back here again. All in all, I would like to thank the school, the students, NSF and most of all, my parents for making this a fun and memorable experience.

